

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, comprising the steps of:

a user, who uses a network via a network provider under a condition of payment of a connection fee, transmitting a connection request that includes a user ID from an information terminal of said user to said network provider;

downloading a program from a server managed by said network provider, or by an entity that has a tie-up with said network provider;

transmitting, to said information terminal of said user, either a license key that is referred to when said downloaded program is activated or executed and that disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key can be generated at said information terminal of said user;

again transmitting, at a time subsequent to said immediately preceding step, a connection request that includes said user ID from said information terminal of said user to said network provider; and

transmitting, to said information terminal of said user, either a new license key that is referred to when said downloaded program is activated or executed and that disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches another predetermined license condition, or information with which said new license key can be generated at said information terminal of said user.

2. (Currently Amended) An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, comprising the steps of:

a user, who obtains a user ID and a password and employs a network via a network provider under a condition of payment of a connection fee, activating a dialer at said information terminal, entering said user ID, said password and a telephone number for accessing said network provider, and transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking, upon the receipt of said connection request for said network provider, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the check are negative, a message used to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning, when the results obtained by the check are affirmative, an IP address to said information terminal of said user, and registering a set consisting of said user ID and said correlated IP address;

transmitting said IP address assigned for said information terminal of said user;

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(590.050)

transmitting a service menu screen, which is an initial screen, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user;

said dialer determining whether a program key, uniquely identifying a program type at said network provider, is present at said information terminal, and where said program key is not found to be present transmitting, when said user selects a file for downloading an article on said service menu, a request for a connection with a file server from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

transmitting, when said file server receives said connection request, to said information terminal of said user a file downloading service menu or a menu that can be introduced into said service menu;

transmitting, when said user selects the downloading of a desired file from said file downloading service menu, a file downloading request from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

generating a license key, based on specified downloaded program information, that is associated with said desired file that is selected by said user and with said user ID that is specified for said IP address included in said file downloading request and assigned to said information terminal of said user, and information that is associated with a license condition for a downloaded program;

downloading to said information terminal said license key, said program key, and said selected program file, said program file being capable of referring to said downloaded license key when said downloaded program is activated or executed, and

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capable of disabling at least a part of the function of said downloaded program, when said program matches a predetermined said licensing condition provided by reference to said license key;

disconnecting said information terminal of said user from said network provider;

activating a dialer, at a time subsequent to the termination of said immediately preceding step, in said information terminal of said user, entering said user ID, said password and said telephone number for accessing said network provider, and thereafter transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking again, when said network provider receives said connection request, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the check are negative, a message used to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning an IP address, when the results obtained by the re-checking are affirmative, for said information terminal of said user and registering a set consisting of said user ID and said corresponding IP address;

transmitting said downloaded program specifying information from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

~~generating a new license key based on said user ID and said received downloaded program specifying information; and~~ generating information from which a new license key can be generated;

transmitting ~~said new license key~~ to said information terminal of said user said
information from which a new license key can be generated; and
generating a new license key at said information terminal of the user.

3. (Currently Amended) An information distribution method for transmitting
information to an information terminal connected via a network, comprising the steps of:

a user, who obtains a user ID and a password and employs a network via a
network provider under a condition of payment of a connection fee, activating a dialer at
said information terminal, entering said user ID, said password and a telephone number
for accessing said network provider, and transmitting a connection request to said
network provider;

checking, upon the receipt of said connection request for said network provider,
said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the check are negative, a message used
to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning, when the results obtained by the check are affirmative, an IP address to
said information terminal of said user, and registering a set consisting of said user ID and
said correlated IP address;

transmitting said IP address assigned for said information terminal of said user;

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transmitting a service menu screen, which is an initial screen, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user;

said dialer determining whether a program key, uniquely identifying a program type at said network provider, is present at said information terminal, and where said program key is not found to be present transmitting, when said user selects a file for downloading an article on said service menu, a request for a connection with a file server from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

transmitting, when said file server receives said connection request, to said information terminal of said user a file downloading service menu or a menu that can be introduced into said service menu;

transmitting, when said user selects the downloading of a desired file from said file downloading service menu, a file downloading request from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

generating a license key, based on specified downloaded program information, that is associated with said desired file that is selected by said user and with said user ID that is specified for said IP address included in said file downloading request and assigned to said information terminal of said user, and information that is associated with a license condition for a downloaded program;

registering said user ID and said downloaded program specifying information with which said user ID is correlated;

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downloading to said information terminal said license key, said program key, and said selected program file, said program file being capable of referring to said downloaded license key when said downloaded program is activated or executed, and capable of disabling at least a part of the function of said downloaded program, when said program matches a predetermined said licensing condition provided by reference to said license key;

disconnecting said information terminal of said user from said network provider;

activating a dialer, at a time subsequent to the termination of said immediately preceding step, in said information terminal of said user, entering said user ID, said password and said telephone number for accessing said network provider, and thereafter transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking again, when said network provider receives said connection request, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the re-checking are negative, a message used to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning an IP address, when the results obtained by the re-checking are affirmative, for said information terminal of said user and registering a set consisting of said user ID and said corresponding IP address;

searching for said downloaded program specifying information that is registered while correlated with said user ID;

~~generating a new license key~~ based on said user ID and said downloaded program specifying information that is found through said search; and generating information from which a new license key can be generated;

transmitting ~~said new license key~~ to said information terminal of said user said information from which a new license key can be generated; and

generating a new license key at said information terminal of the user.

4. (Currently Amended) An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network comprising the steps of:

transmitting a connection request, which includes a user ID, to a network provider from an information terminal of a user that holds either a license key, which is referred to when a program is activated or executed and which disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key can be generated at said information terminal of said user; and

transmitting, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user, a new license key for said program or for information that can generate said new license key at the information terminal of said user.

5. (Currently Amended) An information distribution system for, under the conditions imposed for the payment of a connection fee, transmitting information to an information terminal of a user who uses a network via a network provider comprising:

a PPP server for receiving, from said information terminal, a connection request, including a user ID, and for supporting a network connection;

a file server for receiving, from said information terminal, a request for the transmission of a downloaded program, and for transmitting to a network provider a connection request, which includes a user ID, from an information terminal of a user that holds either a license key, which is referred to when a program is activated or executed and which disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key can be generated at said information terminal of said user; and

a subscription manager for, when said user is again connected to said PPP server, generating a new license key at the information terminal of said user for said downloaded program.

6. (Currently Amended) A software product for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network comprising:

program code for, when a connection request, including a user ID, is transmitted to a network provider from an information terminal of a user who employs, via said network provider, a network under a condition that is dependent on the payment of a connection fee, and when said information terminal is connected to said network provider and a program is downloaded from said network provider, or from a server operated by an entity having a tie-up with said network provider, generating a license key, which is referred to when said downloaded program is activated or executed and which disables at

least a part of the function of said downloaded program when said downloaded program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key can be generated at said information terminal of said user; and

program code for generating a new license key at the information terminal of said user for said downloaded program when said user is again connected to said network provider.

7. (Currently Amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

transmitting a connection request, which includes a user ID, to a network provider from an information terminal of a user that holds either a license key, which is referred to when a program is activated or executed and which disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key can be generated at said information terminal of said user; and

transmitting, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user, a new license key for said program or for information that can generate said new license key at the information terminal of said user.